

**St. Marys Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Special Called Meeting
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Meeting Minutes for October 21, 2013

The special called meeting of the St. Marys DDA was called to order by Straight at 1:30 pm. The purpose of the meeting is to have the Economic Development Director brief the City Manager on ongoing projects pending for actions post the Directors departure from the City of St. Marys on November 1st.

Members Present: Jerry Brandon, John Morrissey, Terry Landreth, Charlie Smith and Gary Straight

Members not Present: Jim Lomis & Cheri Richter

Guest in attendance: Kay Westberry, Steve Crowell, Tom Cannon, Gordon Jackson, Bob Nutter and Dave Reilly

Staff: Artie Jones, III; Director, Renée Coakley; Executive Assistant

Additions to the Agenda: There were no additions to the agenda.

BUSINESS DISCUSSION:

Disposition of DDA Golf Cart: Straight reported that after review it was determined that the DDA did purchase the golf cart in 2007 and opened the conversation up for discussion as to which direction to take with the disposal of the golf cart. Brandon suggested that Tourism be contacted since they have used the golf cart in the past to see if they would be interested in making an offer for the golf cart. Straight tasked Renée to get an appraisal of the golf cart for possible sale or surplus.

Economic Development Debrief: AJ reported on a variety of projects that he has been working on within the city and highlighted the projects that are still ongoing.

- **St. Marys Intracoastal Gateway (SMIG) project:** AJ reported that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Forum Group, Inc. and the City of St. Marys has been signed and Ms. Cockrum of Forum Group, Inc. will serve as representative for the city and the SMIG committee in the procurement of a prospect for development of the property. Ms. Cockrum is currently working with a representative who develops boutique hotels and will be contacting the SMIG committee once any developments are made with this connection. AJ reminded the group that the SMIG property is a 2.8 acre city owned parcel that was purchased several years ago for approximately \$1.3 million.
- **Food Packaging Project:** AJ reported that he is working with a prospect who is interested in opening a food packaging company in St. Marys. The company currently has 75% of its financing and is working on the remaining 25%. AJ showed several properties to the business prospect and they did not show interest in those sites. The

prospect was also shown the Industrial Development Authority property and they were interested in constructing a new facility in that area.

- **Redevelopment Powers Laws and Tax Allocations Districts (TADs):** AJ reported that he has orchestrated three meetings in the past six months to educate people on this item. Mr. Billy Peppers with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was the presenter at two of those meetings in June. Mr. Peppers worked in Woodstock, Georgia before his current position with DCA and he noted that Woodstock has a large TAD district. AJ reminded the board that this element is only a tool that would possibly draw developers and/or business prospects. If Redevelopment Powers Laws are adopted in St. Marys, it would open doors to utilize TADs in the future if needed. The current timeline for the adoption of the Redevelopment Powers Laws: the mayor and council need to vote by their December meeting, (usually there is only one in December due to holidays), and send the signed resolution to legislature by January to ensure that it was available when sessions begin. A question was asked if the Savannah Sidebar Conference had been yet rescheduled to be used as an informative tool for more people. To date the conference has not been rescheduled. AJ suggested getting Mr. Ken Bleakly to visit St. Marys to do a brief overview of the laws since he was a speaker at the Sidebar Conference that AJ attended in Atlanta. AJ also noted that Darren Harper with the City of Kingsland has completed the process for Kingsland and would be a resource for St. Marys through this process.
- **Budget:** AJ noted that the mayor and council provided \$12,500 for a strategic marketing plan to be completed for the city and at a later council meeting council decided to hold off on the creation of a said plan until after the Redevelopment Powers Law is completed in case there are funds needed to implement a plan for that project.
- **Business Relocation:** AJ noted that he has been working with a local business that is looking to relocate and he has been working with Mr. Al Chapman and his Meeting Street project that he is working on as a possible location for this business prospect.
- **Archway Partnership:** AJ noted that this is a program through the University of Georgia where colleges work together and visit a community to complete a Strategic Weakness Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The students stay with the community for a few years to address any problems that they see within the city, provide staff to put plans together and more. The community pays half of the funding for the group to come to the community and the program pays the other half. AJ noted that the City of Brunswick has utilized this program and the information received is invaluable.
- **CGI Video:** AJ reported that he has been working with this company on the creation of a video for the city. A production team has visited the community obtaining video footage and pictures to complete the product that will eventually be placed on the city website. There will be an introduction video with the mayor speaking and another speaking on the quality of life of the area and school system. The video is currently being finalized.
- **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT):** AJ reported that he has been working with the Planning Director and Mrs. Ann Purcell of GDOT in regards to an Exit 1 realignment and design plan. The Planning Director and Public Works Director are both continuing these efforts to enhance the entryway to St. Marys.
- **Kingsbay Village Shopping Center:** AJ is working with the owner of the Kingsbay Village Shopping Center. The owner plans to complete a revitalization of the shopping

center in the near future. AJ reported that the former marketer for the shopping center was advertising the property in line with properties the owner has in Florida. The owner has since changed brokers and new marketing techniques are in place. Currently the three large staples, (Belk's, Goody's and Cinema 9 movie theater), have signed lengthy contracts and have plans to be located in the center for an ongoing basis. Question was asked to the status of the bankruptcy proceedings on the shopping center (it was stated that the notices were seen approximately September 25, 2013 in the Tribune & Georgian). AJ commented that he is meeting with the owners of the shopping center later this week and will have more definitive answers after that meeting.

- **Wayfinding:** AJ reported that signage to help better navigate the community will soon be installed around the county. St. Marys has completed its permits and will submit them jointly with the other cities and county to GDOT so signs can be ordered. Six signs will be installed in various locations to include Exit 1 on the St. Marys side and at the intersection of Highway 40 and St. Marys Road. Money has been set aside until land disturbance permits are received for installation. Old signage will be removed during the installation process.
- **St. Marys Enterprise Zone:** AJ reported that he has held two public hearings prior to creating the zone and two after to discuss findings. This item will be on the October 21st council agenda for adoption. The program is used to develop property and promote economic development once 3 of 5 criteria are met. The criteria that St. Marys met are unemployment, underdevelopment, pervasive poverty and general distress. The City Attorney has adjusted the documents and the maps have been completed. The advantages a business would receive by utilizing this tool are 100% local tax abatement on property tax for the first five years and reduced by 20% years 6-10. There can also be an allowance on fees on a case by case basis (i.e. impact fees).
- **DDA Update Tonight:** AJ noted that the chairman would be giving an update to council at the October 21st meeting.
- **Calendar for 2014:** Question was asked if there are any trainings or meetings that need to be attended to meet requirements for the Main Street program. AJ noted that the Georgia Downtown Association Conference is a required training for staff annually. The Georgia Economic Development Meeting, (2 conferences-spring and fall each), needs to be attended by staff. The Georgia Academy is held annually and needs to be attended by new council members and board/committee members as they become eligible.
- **Joint Land Use Study (JLUS):** Question was asked if there was anything else that the DDA needed to do for this study. AJ noted that it is important to give feedback on two major items; the airport and use of the mill property in the future. AJ is not aware of anything else that needs to be provided but the City Planning Director is the lead person on this project for the city.

Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm with a motion by Morrissey and second by Landreth. All were in favor.

Charlie Smith, Secretary
Prepared by Renée Coakley, Executive Assistant